

## **Cross- Equator Collaboration: Dillon Ranger District hosts Brazilian Land Managers**

**By Kate Jerman, White River National Forest**

What do the Amazon and High Alpine have in common? In terms of ecology, not much. However, the two locations are linked through an international partnership that fosters learning and stewardship from one side of the equator to the other. The U.S. Forest Service has worked with the Brazilian government to conserve biodiversity and forests in the Amazon Basin for more than two decades. Today, the U.S. Forest Service receives funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development to build capacity for the conservation of tropical forests in the Amazon.

Recently, three land managers from the Instituto Chico Mendes de Conservacao de Biodiversidade, traveled to the United States to meet with the U.S. Forest Service. Sérgio Brant, Jorge Nogueira, and André Oliviera spent the day touring the White River National Forest's Dillon Ranger District, learning about how to establish, monitor, and manage concessions and permits on public lands. One of ICMBio's major priorities is to increase the number of visitors to protected areas, and to do so sustainably. The ICMBio is responsible for the creation, management and public use of all extractive and biological reserves as well as national parks and forests in Brazil.

"As an institution implementing recreation policy, it is important to gather information from the Forest Service, which has over one hundred years of experience in this area," stated Jorge Nogueira, Coordinator of Public Use Services. "This experience gives us an idea of how we can provide better recreation opportunities in Brazil."

During their visit the sun was out, but temperatures were far from tropical, as the group met at the Arapahoe Basin Ski Area to discuss how the public-private partnership works. The ski area is one of the highest elevation resorts in the country with the longest ski season, located entirely on National Forest lands. Alan Henceroth, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer (VP/COO) led the tour of the ski area, giving the group insight to the permitting process from the private-business perspective. For one of the Brazilians in the group it was their first time in the U.S. and on a chairlift!

The visit provided a great opportunity for knowledge exchange. "Global environmental challenges require natural resource professionals to collaborate across borders, stated Michelle Zweede, Latin American Specialist of International Programs for the U.S. Forest Service. "The United States benefits greatly from our work overseas. Innovative technologies and management tools are brought back to the U.S. and opportunities to hone US Forest Service skills are increased."

The U.S. Forest Service is proud to facilitate this cultural exchange and information sharing across borders, or should we say, across the equator. The Brazilian visitors joked that if Forest Service employees come to Brazil, they would not need as many warm layers to tour the Amazon, but should instead invest in some bug spray.